Abstract

Alarming complexity of modern society poses a variety of complicated problems leading to conflicts, frustration, unhealthy rivalry and acts as check on dynamic personal development of students that result in value erosion and serious maladjustment among them. Under these circumstances it becomes essential that the educational institutions should come forward for equipping the children properly for cultivating life skills, moulding personality and promoting capacities to choose right vocation according to their aptitude and interest through an organized intervention programme of guidance and counseling which will be reflected in the behaviour of students and thereby to protect future humanity from further deterioration of values. In the context of the changing socio-cultural scenario the repertoire of effective practices of guidance and counselling has been increasing at an unexpected speed. It enables the students in enriching the perspective and promoting the attitude towards resolving educational, vocational and personal problems. Therefore, the aim of this study was to develop a Strategically Aligned Guidance and Counselling Package (SAGCP) with special focus to nurture Life Skills, develop Personality and enable them to select right choices of Vocation of students at higher secondary level. To ensure the methodological triangulation mixed methods designs include both quantitative and qualitative approach adopted for the present study. Pretest-posttest non equivalent group design served as the blueprint for the study and quantitative data was collected by experiment with the developed package with select higher secondary students of two schools of Kerala state and it is compared with two prevailing groups. Thus total sample of 720 students participated in the study. Qualitative aspect of the study comprised of semi-structured interview and focus group discussion with school counsellors, principals and teachers of higher secondary schools of Kerala. The analysis of data done by using statistical techniques that included the t-test, Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA), Scheff Post Hoch analysis and percentage analysis were used to test the significance and determine whether to reject or accept the study hypotheses. The close scrutiny of the findings throws light into the positive impact of the developed SAGCP for life skills attainment, personality development and vocational choices. The findings revealed that that those students in experimental group had better growth in the competencies than those in the prevailing groups. The analysis of the findings also indicated that there is no significant gender difference in effectiveness of SAGCP on life skills attainment and personality development but there is differences found on their vocational choices. From the analysis of data also mentioned that there is no significant difference between govt and aided school students in their life skills attainment, personality development and vocational choice. The dimensions oriented analysis of life skills and personality development indicated that SAGCP was found to be effective for enhancing all select dimensions. It was recommended that the Government authorities should establish clear policies that would improve and strengthen guidance and counselling services to make effective for the attainment of life skills, development of personality and choice of vocation.

Background of the Study

In today's fast-moving technological world, there is effectively an erosion of the academic landscape and learner's ego boundaries and they go to a different level of thinking that place only for their immediate cronies. Their aspiration gets blurred by conflicts and other external forces. This inevitably leads to the delinquent behaviour and even terrorism and extortion. Impact of political influence in the school atmosphere also can have a significant impact in the personality of students. The students should have a strong flavour of exclusivity and is not compromised by the unwanted intrusion of others. The guidance researcher has to visualize the needs of future generations in facing these unknown realities and suggest ways and methods of developing built-in resources for this purpose.

Around the world, life skills based programme is being adopted as a means to empower for moulding students in challenging situations. Life skills based education helps children understand themselves, their friends and their world. A differentiated mode of research is going to be felt in the coming years to understand the personality development of the new generation who are getting increasingly cut off from social contacts and are getting even more familiar with the machines all around them. Personality is a divine gift that forms the foundation of a successful life. Guidance and counselling programme aim at orienting individuals to face the challenges in the present scenario.

Laying the seeds to choose the right vocation oriented course is an important event in the life of an individual. The selection of a wrong vocation can lead to unhappiness, discontent and ultimate failure, because the occupation that the person follows is not merely a means of earning a livelihood. This wrong choice of an occupation not only brings frustration for the growing adult, but a waste of energy, money and precious time. So utmost care should be given to the vocational choices of students at higher secondary level since it is an important event in one's academic and career pursuit. Under these circumstances it becomes essential that the educational institutions should come forward for equipping the students properly for cultivating life skills, moulding personality and promoting capacities to choose right vocation according to their aptitude and interest through an organized programme of guidance and counselling.

Need and Significance of the Study

In 21st century the students face several problems that arise because of the explosion of knowledge and the complexity of acquiring that knowledge from the class room set up.

The employment scenario is also changing in tune with IT and such new areas like biotechnology, microbiology, nanotechnology and such related areas. Consequently students are very anxious and they confront certain unethical problems in the class room. In order to remove their anxiety and perplexity and create a conducive climate for learning they should be given proper guidance and counselling. The practices of setting academic performances and classroom behavior in the prevailing guidance and counselling programmes are inadequate and unfortunately most of the schools do not have proper counselling facilities in this area. So these children are forced to turn to their peers or other media for support and guidance or they live with their problems.

The current system of guidance and counseling is devoid of solving the latent problems that arise from the complexity of social milieu. Even if the classroom practitioners try to provide guidance to students, they are unable to solve all problems that the students confront with. So the investigator felt the need for devising a Strategically Aligned Guidance and Counselling Package with special focus on life skills attainment, personality development and vocational choices, of students at higher secondary level to overcome such difficulties associated with the present system of guidance and counseling.

Even if a few studies have conducted on this topic, only a negligible number of studies have been spotted on life skills and personality in the Indian, especially Kerala context. The existing instructional practices for imparting guidance and counseling programmes include seminars, career talk and workshops. The UNESCO suggested certain strategies in its guidelines for developing guidance and counseling programmes. This study is based on the so called guidelines of UNESCO and the existing guidance and counselling models like Holistic Student Centred Model of Guidance (Watts & Van Esbroeck,1998) and A Model Comprehensive, Developmental Guidance and Counseling Program for Texas Public Schools, A Guide for Program Development Pre-K-12th Grade *(2004).*The investigator aligned some appropriate strategies based on different studies and attempted to develop a Strategically Aligned Guidance and Counselling Package with special focus on Life Skills Attainment, Personality Development and Vocational Choices of Students at Higher Secondary Level.

Statement of the Problem

In this rapidly moving complex society, the students are struggling for the better adjustment and existence. If they are not getting proper guidance they may engage in anti-social activities. The age of these students are sensitive and highly inflammable. They

experience conflicts between themselves and the society and even within them. A student at higher secondary level is not mature enough to critically evaluate baffling situations he is continuously faced with. He needs somebody to help him in the solution of problems and thus avoid tensions and conflicts. Indiscipline is a severe problem in our present educational system. There are many social problems that teenagers go through. Consuming drugs, including alcohol and tobacco, continue to be a serious problem for these children. Despite national efforts to eradicate these problems, many students still find their way to these mind altering chemicals. Through a well planned guidance and counseling programme, the substance abuse can be controlled among these students.

Selecting an appropriate career is a critical task that faces all adolescents in all societies. The selection of a career made during the senior year is among the most critical decisions in a person's lifetime. This decision has a far-reaching impact on the senior's future in terms of lifestyle, status, income, security and job satisfaction. The career guidance is provided by the consultants so that an individual can easily select an appropriate occupation or education which goes well with their capabilities, skills and interest. In these circumstances, it is essential to help and guide the youth to worthwhile channels through the introduction of guidance and counseling services on a universal scale in our educational institutions. Even though the guidance and counseling started in our schools and colleges recently, still it is in an infancy stage.

Teachers and social workers try to solve the problems faced by the students and the society by devising strategies in haphazard way. But we need a systematic and scientific way of solving student's problems. This requires a comprehensive study of the classroom climate and societal changes. So the investigator is contemplating to align various strategies for the improvement of present system of guidance and counseling. Thus the study is entitled as

DEVELOPING A STRATEGICALLY ALIGNED GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING PACKAGE WITH SPECIAL FOCUS ON LIFE SKILLS ATTAINMENT, PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT AND VOCATIONAL CHOICES OF STUDENTS AT HIGHER SECONDARY LEVEL.

Operational Definition of key terms

Developing **:** It refers to become bigger, or organized, to expand or enlarge, to grow larger, fuller or complete." In the present study the "developing" according to the investigator is "preparing and validating" a Strategically Aligned Guidance and Counselling Package with

Special Focus on Life Skills Attainment, Personality development and Vocational choices of Students at Higher Secondary Level.

Strategically Aligned: Strategic alignment is the process of bringing the actions of the package into line with the planned goals and objectives of the package. Strategic alignment was embedded more deeply through the articulation of various learning strategies with guidance and counselling.

Strategically Aligned Guidance and Counselling Package: It refers to a collection of various strategies bring together and specially designed with special focus on certain life skills attainment, personality development and vocational choices of students at higher secondary level.

Life skills: Life skills are the abilities to face the day to day complex situations successfully and adjust with them efficiently.

Personality Development: Personality development is the development of the organized pattern of behaviors and attitudes that makes a person distinctive. In the present study, it refers to the improvement of attitudes, behavior and character of an individual towards life.

Vocational choices: It refers to the selection or preferences of future work or career of an individual.

***Students at Higher Secondary Level*.:** Students studying in 11^{th} and 12^{th} standards following Kerala state syllabus.

Hypotheses of the study

1. The prevailing modalities of guidance and counseling are inadequate for enhancing life skills attainment, developing personality and selecting proper vocation of students at higher secondary level.
2. The Strategically Aligned Guidance and Ccounseling Package (SAGCP) prepared with special focus on life skills attainment, personality development and vocational choices, is an effective technique for students at higher secondary level.
3. The package (SAGCP) is more effective than the existing school programmes of guidance and counseling with regard to attainment of life skills, development of personality and choice of vocation.

4. There exists significant difference in the effectiveness of prevailing mode of guidance and counseling programmes conducted by school counselors and classroom practitioners with regard to attainment of life skills, development of personality and choice of vocation of students at higher secondary level.
5. There is no gender difference in the effectiveness of package (SAGCP) with regard to life skills attainment, personality development and vocational choices.
6. There exists difference in the effectiveness of SAGCP as a strategy for the guidance and counseling of students opted different subjects.
7. There exists no difference in the effectiveness of SAGCP as a strategy for the guidance and counseling of students belonging to government and aided schools.
8. The package (SAGCP) is equally effective for enhancing all set levels of dimensions of life skills.
9. The package (SAGCP) is equally effective for enhancing all set levels of dimensions of personality development.

Objectives of the Study

1. To identify the current strategies adopted for providing guidance and counselling programmes in Higher Secondary Schools of Kerala.
2. To Develop and validate a Strategically Aligned Guidance and Counselling Package (SAGCP) with Special Focus on Life Skills Attainment, Personality development and Vocational choices of students at Higher Secondary level.
3. To find out the effect of SAGCP on Life Skills Attainment, personality development and vocational choices of higher secondary students trained with SAGCP.
4. To compare the effect of SAGCP on Life Skills Attainment, personality development and vocational choices of higher secondary students in the experimental group with prevailing groups in terms of total sample and sub-samples.
   Sub samples: Based on gender, optional subjects and type of schools
5. To compare the effect of prevailing guidance and counseling programmes conducted by school counsellor with that of the trained classroom practitioner on Life Skills Attainment, personality development and vocational choices of higher secondary students.
6. To find out the gender differences in the effectiveness of package (SAGCP) with regard to life skills attainment, personality development and vocational choices.

7. To compare the effect of SAGCP as a strategy for the guidance and counseling with regard to life skills attainment, personality development and vocational choices of students opted different subjects.
8. To compare the effectiveness of SAGCP as a strategy for the guidance and counseling with regard to life skills attainment, personality development and vocational choices of students belonging to government and aided schools.
9. To find out the effect of SAGCP on set levels of dimensions of life skills attainment of higher secondary students in the experimental group.
10. To find out the effect of SAGCP on set levels of dimensions of personality development of higher secondary students in the experimental group.
11. To assess feedback from students under experimentation through a package appraisal questionnaire.
12. To conduct case studies of three higher secondary students.

Sample

For qualitative part, there were about 98 higher secondary teachers and 19 principals, 15 school counsellors and 3 higher secondary students for case study were participated in the present study. The samples for the experimental study were 240 Higher Secondary students from Ernakulam and Kottayam Districts. A total sample of 720 participated in the study. The sample also **stratified** appropriately according to sex, optional subjects and type of schools.

Experimental design: Pretest-posttest non-equivalent group design was adopted for the present study.

Tools used were the following:

1. Semi-structured interview schedule
2. A Strategically Aligned Guidance & Counselling Package (SAGCP)
3. Personality Development Index
4. Vocational choice Scale
5. Life skills Attainment Scale
6. Package Appraisal Questionnaire

Statistics techniques applied for the study: t-test, percentage analysis, ANOVA, ANCOVA, Scheff Post Hoch analysis

Methodology in brief

Mixed methods designs include both qualitative and quantitative approach adopted for the present study. Quantitative data was collected by experiment the developed package with select higher secondary students of two schools of Kerala state and it is compared with two prevailing groups. Qualitative aspect of the study comprised of semi-structured interview and focus group discussion with school counsellors, principals and teachers of higher secondary schools of Kerala and case studies of three higher secondary students at higher secondary level. For the effective implementation of the package, the investigator attended career guidance programmes, life skills training programmes and personality development counselling programmes conducted by various schools and other institutions. The SAGCP is validated with a team of experts in the field of education and Psychology. Before the experiment, pilot studies were conducted at different higher secondary schools of Kerala and then implement the SAGCP among higher secondary students and find out the effectiveness of the package on life skills attainment, Personality development and vocational choices. For this, a pre-test was administered to the experimental group and two prevailing groups before the intervention with the developed package and after intervention a post test was administered to the same groups to determine the effectiveness of the package. The data analyzed by using appropriate statistical techniques. A Package Appraisal Questionnaire was administered to students to study the possibility of the developed package. During the period of intervention of package, three cases of different problems identified and provided counseling for them.

Major Findings & Conclusions

The close scrutiny of the findings throws light into the fact that the developed Strategically Aligned Guidance & Counselling Package (SAGCP) was effective for life skills attainment, personality development and vocational choices of students at higher secondary level. The findings revealed that those students in the experimental group had better growth in the competencies than those in the prevailing groups.The conclusions that emerged from the results of the analysis of data according to the objectives formulated for the study are given below:

- The analysis of current status of guidance and counseling revealed that the present system of imparting guidance and counseling in schools are inadequate and there is an urgent need of providing guidance and counseling in schools of

Kerala and a unified policy which will have to be seen to ensure that all pupils in Kerala state have equal access to the counseling resources made available.

- The findings of the study emanated the conclusion that the SAGCP is very effective for the attainment of life skills of experimental group.
- The results revealed that SAGCP is very effective for the development of personality of experimental group.
- The results showed that experimental group has opted right vocational choices in eight areas after the implementation of package.
- The results indicated that experimental group is better than the prevailing groups in their life skills attainment .
- The results indicated that experimental group is better than the prevailing groups in personality development.
- From the findings it is obvious that experimental group select proper vocational choices after the implementation of SAGCP than prevailing groups.
- The results of the analysis of comparison of the prevailing groups indicated that prevailing group I (Students trained by a school counselor) better than the prevailing groupII (Students trained by trained classroom practitioners) with regard to attainment of life skills.
- The results of the analysis of comparison of the prevailing groups indicated that prevailing group I (Students trained by a school counselor) better than the prevailing groupII (Students trained by trained classroom practitioners) with regard to personality development.
- From the findings it was clear that there is no significant differences between prevailing group I and prevailing group II in their vocational choices after the implementation of SAGCP except in one area that means these students are not getting proper career guidance for the choice of proper vocation.
- There exists no significant difference between boys and girls in life skills attainment before and after the experiment.
- There exists no significant difference between boys and girls in personality development before and after the experiment.
- The findings show that there exists significant difference among boys and girls in the experimental group show significant difference in some vocational areas.
- The results show that science students attained more life skills compare to students of other subjects.

- The findings reveal that science students are better development of personality than students of other subjects.
- There exists no significant difference between aided and government school students in life skills attainment before and after the experiment.
- There exists no significant difference between aided and government students in personality development before and after the experiment.
- There exists no significant difference in the aided and government students in vocational choices before and after the experiment.
- The results of dimension wise pre-test and post-test score of life skills attainment reveal that SAGCP is effective for enhancing self awareness, empathy, problem solving, inter-personal skills and stress management. Among the five dimensions the highest value of critical ratio is obtained for self awareness. So among the life skills dimensions SAGCP is more effective for improving self awareness.
- The findings of dimension wise pre-test and post-test score of personality development revealed that SAGCP is effective for enhancing social concern, leadership, self confidence, assertiveness, emotional adjustment, values and culture.
- The reflections of the package appraisal questionnaire from students reveaedl that they are highly satisfied with the SAGCP.
- The case studies of three higher secondary students revealed that the guidance and counselling is very beneficial to these students to solve their problems to a great extent.

Educational Implications of the study

The present study intended to develop a Strategically Aligned Guidance and Counselling Package (SAGCP) with special focus to nurture Life Skills, develop Personality and enable them to select right choices of Vocation of students at higher secondary level. It equips the students in enriching the perspective and promoting the attitude towards resolving educational, vocational and personal problems. The major implications of the study described below:

The school disciplinary problems can be solved to a great extent by implementing guidance and counselling. The frustration of the youth which lead them to the use of drugs and other intoxications can be reduced. Juvenile delinquency also can be reduced in this

manner. Another great curse upon our society is the increasing tendency of committing suicide. If a strong personality is developed in children during their school days, the increased rate of suicide can also be minimized. Disintegration of families faced by modern nuclear families can also be prevented when children are taught the importance of parental love and thus the trend of sending old people into the old age home can also be reduced. A society without exploitation and corruptions, a society with peace and prosperity may be the ultimate possibility of guidance and counseling which is the highlight of the present study.

The major findings of the study reveal that the newly developed SAGCP is effective for developing various life skills, moulding good personality and making suitable choice of vocation. In the light of the study, the investigator likes to recommend that the educational authorities should take necessary steps to adopt the package to train teachers and school counselors at pre-service and in-service stages for enhancing life skills, developing personality and promoting the abilities for choosing right vocations of students at higher secondary level. The findings of the study can be used as a consultant model with a wide spectrum of implications for guidance professionals. The findings of this study have shown that guidance and counselling services are paramount for the overall students' social, personal and academic welfare. Therefore, the recommendations of this study may assist the educational policy makers in planning and making appropriate decisions to strengthen guidance and counselling services in the universities. The findings of this study could also assist student counsellors in undertaking the students' affairs, thus helping them to achieve academic, vocational, social and personal growth and appropriate integration into the values and productive activities of the society. Moreover, parents can also benefit from the findings of this study since their efforts in counselling their children would be supplemented. The findings could also pave the way for educational stakeholders to check and stem out wastage and stagnation in education. For instance, failure of students to complete their studies can render the education system ineffective. Finally, it is anticipated that this study will create awareness on the importance of effective guidance and counselling services among higher secondary students and hence filling the gaps in research in this area and may prompt other researchers to undertake similar studies in other educational institutions.